



Trevor Manuel

The National Planning Commission:

Draft National Development Plan

The South African National Planning Commission (NPC) handed over its draft National Development Plan (NDP) to the President of the Republic, Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, on **11 November 2011**.

This post, now adapted, was added to the CU “Development” course during its previous iteration [on “CU-Africa” on 10 March 2012](#). Abridged, this post can still serve the instructive purpose of introducing the NDP process, as well as introducing one chapter of the draft, namely Chapter 3 on Economy and Employment (November 2011 draft).

On 15 August 2013 the actual plan came out, called “*Plan 2030: Our future - make it work*”. Links are given below to the new document. But we will continue to refer to the draft for

this item, this time, so as to retain the points of discussion as they arose in time. In any case, the NDP is still being revised, and it will continue to be revised.

Our purpose is to observe the thinking that informed the process. We note that the November 2011 draft closely followed the format of the July 2011 “Diagnostic” document.

In the three-page “[popular plan](#)” version of the NDP draft, the NPC stated that after a three-month consultation period (November 2011 to February 2012) the plan was to be turned into reality. This did not happen. Nor is it ever likely to happen in this literal sense, because what we posted on the CU-Africa in 2012 has turned out to be true: This was never an executable plan. Here follows more of what we wrote then:

The NDP is apolitical and a-historical. It makes no reference to the Freedom Charter or to the National Democratic Revolution. It does not mention the world’s first-ever National Plan – Lenin’s tremendous [GOELRO Plan](#), adopted by revolutionary Russia in 1920. Nor does the NDP make any critical comment on the political philosophy of development. Searches of the entire NPC web site, including the 444 pages of the plan, for the words “Lenin”, “Socialism”, “Dialectic”, “Slovo” or “Mao” return nil results. The term “Capital”, on the other hand, returns 130 results. Try it yourself. Google for “**[selected term]**” **site:www.npconline.co.za**.

Instead of doing what we have done in our CU course on Development, the draft NDP applies the logic of “therapy to victim” (T2V).

NDP not dialectical

Which means that problems, or sicknesses, are “diagnosed” in terms of received wisdom, or “common sense”. Of course, the solutions for those problems are predetermined by the definition of the problems/sicknesses that the “diagnosis” selects, or invents.

Subsequent progress is imagined as inevitably gradual, incremental or marginal, and not as dialectical, or revolutionary.

The product of this kind of reasoning is eclectic, and it refuses to take on board any acknowledged, as opposed to tacit, “meta-narrative”. In other words, it refuses overt politics. It just sees South Africa as sick, and it sees itself, the National Planning Commission, as South Africa’s technocratic healer. It sees SA as being under doctor’s orders, with the NPC in the role of bossy doctor.

The result of this “T2V” can only possibly be a “best practice”; that is, a cleaned-up, marginally-improved version of the *status quo*. It cannot possibly be a revolutionary break. Unlike the National Democratic Revolution, the NDP is not even a preparation for revolutionary, qualitative change

National Development Plan Downloadable

“On 15th August 2012, the revised National Development Plan 2030 entitled, “Our future-make it work” was handed to the President at a special joint sitting of Parliament. All political parties represented in Parliament expressed support for the NDP.” – NPC web site

Here are some links:

- NDP downloadable from <http://www.npconline.co.za/pebble.asp?relid=25>
- SACP's May Day message, 2013 is at: <http://www.sacp.org.za/main.php?ID=3963>
- SACP discussion document (click for link): "[Let's not monumentalise the NDP](#)" (May 2013)

The National Development Plan in chapters:

[NDP 2030-Prelims - \(370 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-Vision Statement - \(47.2 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-Overview - \(1.6 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-Summary of objectives and actions - \(76.9 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH1-Policy making in a complex environment - \(1.2 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH2-Demographic trends - \(663 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH3-Economy and employment - \(2.1 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH4-Economic infrastructure - \(713 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH5-Environmental sustainability - \(630 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH6-An integrated and inclusive rural economy - \(1 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH7-Positioning South Africa in the world - \(475 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH8-Transforming human settlements - \(1.5 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH9-Improving education, training and innovation - \(613 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH10-Promoting health - \(2.5 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH11-Social protection - \(743 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH12-Building safer communities - \(505 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH13-Building a capable and developmental state - \(415 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH14-Fighting corruption - \(296 KB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-CH15-Transforming society and uniting the country - \(1.4 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030-Addendum-A conversation with South Africans - \(226 KB\)](#)

The Plan (NDP 2030):

[Executive Summary - NDP 2030 - Our future - make it work - \(4.93 MB\)](#)

[NDP 2030 - Our future - make it work - \(16.7 MB\)](#)

Chapter 3 on Economy and Employment

Herewith, **attached**, is the National Development Plan draft Chapter 3 on Economy and Employment.

The chapter begins:

“Achieving full employment, decent work and sustainable livelihoods is the only way to improve living standards and ensure a dignified existence for all South Africans.

“This will be achieved by expanding the economy to absorb labour

“We can reduce the unemployment rate to 6 percent by 2030.”

The National Development Plan is a gradualist plan, and not a revolutionary plan. It works from the unspoken assumption that what we have would be good enough, if only it was improved. In this chapter, 2030 looks very much like 2012, only with some of the bad bits made a bit better.

The chapter begins with some projections and some generalities. After page 7, it goes into “Employment scenarios”.

This is so-called scenario planning, which is a kind of dreaming. Is that bad? You be the judge.

Then the chapter proceeds to “challenges”.

Thereafter, from pages 15 to 45 the document is mainly prophecy, or declaration. Sentences are written as “need to be”, “would be” and “will be”, without much sense of difference between these. It is not altogether clear whether this is a guide or a model, or an intended set of laws.

There is a Conclusion on the last three pages (49-48).

Is this chapter from the NDP on employment, just a wish-list? You be the judge.

And if it is a wish-list, is that bad?

Yes, it would be bad, if the wish-list is taken as a plan, because a wish is something less than a plan.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [National Plan, C3, Economy and Employment – extracts](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).